

## Meeting of the Westminster Selectboard

Wednesday, November 27, 2019

### Westminster, VT Town Hall

**Members Present:** K. Sheldon Beebe (Chair), Susan Harlow (Vice Chair), Craig Allen, Kevin Hughes (Clerk) and Toby Young

**Others Present:** Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Mike Mrowicki, Nader Hashim, Chris Potter, and Jan Ameen

1. **Call to Order:** K. Sheldon Beebe called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** November 13, 2019 - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of November 13, 2019 as printed. Susan Harlow seconded the motion and the motion carried.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:**
  - \*\* *State Representatives (Mike Mrowicki & Nader Hashim)* – Nader Hashim started the discussion on a brief insight to what’s coming up in the House & Senate this season. Three main issues were hit on by Mr. Hashim:
    - 1.) “Move Over Law” – This law will add teeth to the problem of safety as officers, first responders, and rescue are working on our interstates and highways with people not moving over and providing a safe lane for the emergency crews do their jobs. Nader continued that he will present new language that will help this issue when in court to make this a chargeable offence.
    - 2.) “Youthful Offender” – Right now, a youthful offender is not mandated to attend an accountability program after serving his/her sentence. Statistics show that education will help stop or at least slow down youthful offenders from re-offending and/or using drugs for the need of money. This State session will take a hard look at this subject and how this new “accountability program” might be installed and paid for.
    - 3.) “Police Response” – Nader Hashim stated that the State of Vermont is looking at the problem of having enough officers patrolling our roadways. He stated that it’s very clear that we do not have enough manpower to do a safe and efficient job as it pertains to law enforcement. He has found that States such as Massachusetts pay their officers much more to start and that is where the new, would be, recruits go. This session, the State will be looking into what the answer is to this ongoing problem. The Selectboard asked many questions about communication between citizens and law enforcement. They asked about drug traffic patrolling, drug addiction rehabilitation, and timing of this very problematic issue. All agreed safety is being jeopardized because the lack of response time.

Mike Mrowicki thanked the Board for letting them speak this evening and told the Board that he is still working on “Animal Control”.

- “Animal Control” – Mike Mrowicki still thinks that county wide policing of this issue is going to be cheaper for all towns. He continued with a clarification that some rural areas might ban together (three to four towns) and hire one full time “Animal Control Officer” and let him/her take this off the plate of the town. This person would be on call and be paid a stipend from each participating town with a per call fee to make up the wage for this individual.
- “Act 46” - Mike continued his discussion about Act 46 and how Westminster will be hard pressed to find a Judge that will overturn the Board of Education’s decision to consolidate. The Board asked a few questions and Mike ended with “Money is not being saved by this movement as first thought and this is coming from forced towns”.
- “Trash” – Trash and recycling mandates are being looked at again this next session, stated Mr. Mrowicki. Recycling has changed and is costing individuals more than to just throw away and item. No answers yet, but this will definitely be discussed in depth, said Mike.

\*\* *Cemetery Sexton*– Chris Potter – Chris Potter was asked to join the Board for an update of our cemeteries. Chris covered space available, amount of cremations feasible for each lot, cost of each lot, and maintenance of each cemetery. Very few questions were asked and Mr. Beebe thanked Chris for the update.

## **5. Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action)**

A. FY21 Budget - update and discussion - Included in packet was the third draft of the budget and the FY21 third draft of the revenue budget. The Board reviewed and discussed the second half of the proposed budget, line by line. Jan Ameen asked for the breakdown of the Fuel usage for last year because she doubted that the line was strictly used for what its purpose was. History does not prove that this number is accurate she said. The Manager will supply this information to the Board and Ms. Ameen.

- Town Garage (insulation) - The Board discussed the budget for the garage and would like to see a professional, get ideas and pricing for the existing Town Garage as well as the new bays that have been discussed. They left the \$15,000 to hire this inquiry of information and pricing.
- NWCH (North Westminster Community House) - The Board will plan for an engineer to address the next phase of this building after a discussion at Town Meeting. No monies will be placed in this budget for this item.
- Sheriff’s Proposal – The Board discussed the proposal of the 40 hrs. per week for an Officer + 40 hrs. additional coverage from Putney’s Officer and tabled the \$82,000 line item.
- Retreatment – The TM told the Board that this line item has not gone up in years and the town is falling behind on their maintenance of the asphalt roads. The TM is not requesting more money in this budget but will be asking possibly for FY22.

The Town Manager, after the conclusion of the expenditure budget, brought the Board's attention to the revenue report where he showed the significant increase in the Grand List values. This increase will actually reduce taxes as the draft budget stands right now, he stated.

- B. Land Gift - Island Corporation - discussion - The TM told the Board no further information was available to discuss. He will be looking into the final verdict of the Bald Hill Association's request for land use as it pertains to granting a trail from land Owners.
- C. Route 121 Tree Removal - letter dated October 16 – Craig Allen was unable to meet with the two men and requested that the TM write a letter stating that the Town will not be doing any work in this area and to give his name and number for further discussions.

**6. New Business - (Discussion/Action)**

- A. Town Report Dedication/Citizen of the Year – The TM asked the Board to be thinking of candidates and he will be receiving nominations from the public for next meeting.
- B. Warnings for Town Meeting (draft) – The TM showed the Board a list of possible articles that could be on the warning for Town Meeting. This item will be on the next meeting's agenda for further discussion.
- C. Selectboard's report for the Town Report – Susan Harlow will be leading this task and will forward a series of drafts for all to look at before submitting to Kelley.
- D. Executive Session - Personnel matter & Contractual matter - Craig Allen motioned to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter and a contractual matter inviting the TM. Susan Harlow seconded and the motion passed. Will be held after date of next meeting.

**7. Manger's Report - 11-13-2019 -**

- 1). Second Tax Bill update - Information was given about a conversation with the Town's legal counsel and the TM told the Board that the School Board has requested to speak to them at their next meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup>.
- 2). Lift at Town Hall – The TM told the Board that the lift is in compliance because it has been recalibrated and inspected as per State law.
- 3). Assisted Living/Senior Housing - schedule a meeting – The TM will be in touch with available dates for a meeting in December.
- 4). IT Room Construction – The TM told the Board that construction will begin at the Town Hall for the construction of the new IT Room this next week.

**8. Boards and Commissions: None**

**9. Other Business:**

\*Gazette – Craig Allen made a motion to authorize the Gazette Board to use the Town's legal counsel for up to three hours of consultation and the Town will pay for it. Susan Harlow seconded the motion and it passed.

**10. Date of Next Meeting - December 11, 2019 at 6:30 PM**

**The Board moved to executive session at 9:08 p.m.** Upon coming out of Executive Session at 9:22 PM, the Chair requested that the Town Manager write a letter to the Recording Clerks declaring their decision to hold their stipends for the rest of the year at the present rate.

**11. Adjournment:** Toby Young made a motion to adjourn with Kevin Hughes seconding the motion and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 9:28 PM.

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**Clerk**

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**Date**

Minutes prepared by TM 12/02/2019